

FACE INVESTIGATION

SUBJECT: Farmer fell off wagon tongue and was run over by corn-filled wagon
SUMMARY:

A 40 year old white female fell and was run over while helping her husband switch corn wagons. Conditions were dry, it was sunny and late afternoon when the incident occurred. The two had met on a county trunk road and attempted to switch wagons on a grade on the side of the roadway (she picks up the loaded corn wagon and takes it to the drier, he picks up the empty wagon to return to the field). The wagon full of corn (weight approximately 12,000 pounds) had been blocked and the tractor unhooked. The wagon full of corn began to roll forward, the victim jumped on the tongue apparently in an attempt to stop it. The wagon rolled 54 feet, the tongue hit the shoulder of the road. Apparently this was sufficient force to cause the victim to fall off. At this point she was run over by the wagon wheel. The Wisconsin FACE investigator concluded that, in order to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- ! Survey the work-site to identify hazards. All hazards should be removed or controls placed that will ensure worker safety.
- ! Train all workers to recognize and report all safety hazards. Train workers to stop work processes until the safety hazard is corrected.
- ! Consider and address worker safety in the planning phases of projects.
- ! Strictly adhere to a policy of prohibiting riding on non-passenger parts of machinery

INTRODUCTION:

On October 17, 1991, a 40 year-old female sustained fatal crushing injuries when she fell from the tongue of a corn filled wagon and was run over. The FACE investigator was notified by the Wisconsin Department of Labor and Human Relations via their news clipping service 11/11/91. The investigation was initiated by the WI FACE investigator on February 20, 1992. A death certificate, news clippings, and reports from the sheriff's department and the coroner's office were obtained. Photographs include the vehicles involved and the incident site. The sheriff's department investigator accompanied the FACE investigator to the roadway where the incident occurred.

The victim and her husband ran the farm with no employees. The University of Wisconsin Department of Agricultural Engineering was asked to review the factors that lead to this death with the FACE director and provide assistance with developing prevention strategies.

INVESTIGATION:

The victim was working with her husband switching wagons when the incident occurred. While in the process of switching wagons at the side of a roadway and on a slight incline, the wagon full of corn began

to roll down the road. Apparently the victim jumped on the tongue of the wagon and traveled about 54 feet according to the scratch mark left by the tongue in the pavement. After traveling 54 feet, the tongue then hit the soft shoulder causing the victim to fall off the tongue to the ground where she was run over by the wheel.

The victim was unconscious when police arrived. Efforts were made to clear the victim's airway, victim had a faint pulse and was breathing at the time. Due to serious pelvic and abdominal injuries the victim was not moved until the ambulance arrived for transport to an area hospital. The victim was transported via helicopter from the area hospital to a larger hospital where she was pronounced dead approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes after the incident.

CAUSE OF DEATH: Massive internal injuries.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION:

Recommendation #1: Employers should conduct a job site survey to identify potential hazards. Once identified, remove hazards. When removal is not possible, implement appropriate control measures.

Discussion: The site of the work, a sloped highway, was a hazard. The wagon apparently is not equipped with a brake and the blocks used under the wheels were not sufficient. While wagons should be equipped with brakes and blocks should be used under wheels, a jobsite survey would have identified a flat field as the appropriate site for switching wagons.

Recommendation #2: Training in recognition and control of hazards is an ongoing need for farmers and those assisting in the farm work.

Discussion: Training workers to recognize hazards may have alerted the victim to the hazard of jumping on the tongue of a moving wagon.

Recommendation #3: Employers should address worker safety in the planning phase of all projects.

Discussion: Planning the work with worker safety in mind may have caused an alteration in the plan with the wagon switch occurring in a flat area of the field.

Recommendation #4: Through written policy and practice, strictly prohibit jumping on moving machinery